



Dorchester Civic Society

An Independent Voice

Registered Charity No. 268636

Alan Rowley (Chairman)

Four Winds, 1 Westleaze, Charminster, Dorchester DT2 9PZ

Email: dorchestercivicsociety@gmail.com

www.civicvoice.org.uk/society/dorchester-civic-society

AGM NOTICE & NEWSLETTER

July 2013

Dear Fellow Members

Please regard this newsletter as the formal notice of our AGM that will be held at the Dorford Centre, Top O' Town, on Tuesday 24th September at 7.30pm. The agenda will follow the customary format:

- Minutes of 2012 AGM
- Chairman's and Treasurer's reports
- Election of Officers and Committee
- Speaker: Peter James (Poundbury Project Manager) – *Update on Poundbury*

Talks Programme for 2013 / 2014

Before the Society's programme of talks starts, you are invited to a joint meeting with the Dorchester Association. This is on Friday 13th September at 7.30pm with refreshments from 7.00 pm at Dorchester County Museum when Kate Hebditch will give a talk entitled *The Great Fire of Dorchester and 400 years of its effects*.

The theme for our own programme of talks, starting in October, is 'Visions for Dorchester'. The talks will take place at the Dorford Centre starting at 7.30 with refreshments from 7.00pm. The speakers are:

- **Tuesday 22 October 2013**
Steven Bee: Principal, Urban Counsel and a Director of The Academy of Urbanism; formerly Director of Planning & Development, English Heritage
Dorchester - A Heritage-aware Future?
- **Tuesday 19 November 2013**
Alistair Parker: Head of Development Consultancy, Cushman & Wakefield, Real Estate Consultants
Dorchester - Home Town or Clone Town? The ingredients of a successful high street
- **Tuesday 25 February 2014**
Mike Clarke: Chairman of Hitchin Forum
Empowering Dorchester - Lessons from Hitchin Forum
'Hitchin Forum seeks to help residents retain what is good for the town and only settle for the best, particularly when developments are planned.'
- **Tuesday 25 March 2014**
Joe Doak: Senior Lecturer in Urban Planning and Development, School of Real Estate & Planning, Henley Business School, University of Reading
Resilient Dorchester - Lessons from an Interconnected World

We chose the 'Visions for Dorchester' theme and these topics in the hope of attracting a wide audience, promoting public discussion about the town's future and highlighting the Society's concerns and activities. As I have said before, if the Civic Society is to continue beyond its 40th anniversary year we must reverse the decline in our membership – there are now just 70 of us – and recruit members willing to play an active role in our work. Ensuring that this talks programme is widely publicised is a first step. For this reason the Committee decided to post hard copies of this Newsletter to you all so we could include copies of the A5 flyer about the programme. The flyer also summarises the aims and work of the Society: please play your part in promoting the Society by passing a copy on to anyone you think might be interested in coming to the talks – perhaps you can even offer them a lift! Let me know if you want more copies of the flyer.

Dorchester Civic Society exists to stimulate people's interest in the town and its setting; promote high standards of architecture, urban design and planning; safeguard buildings and areas of historic interest; and promote civic pride.



Some other news

A new Local Plan for West Dorset

The West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland Joint Local Plan was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in June. An inspector has been appointed to determine whether the plan is sound and a formal hearing will probably take place later this year. In response to opposition to proposals for major housing developments across the District, WDDC belatedly modified or withdrew all of the controversial proposals from the draft plan, including one for a site south-east of Dorchester outside the bypass. Instead, the Council has opted to shorten the plan period, so reducing the amount of land that had to be allocated for new housing. This short-term fix will necessitate the Local Plan having to be revised, probably as early as 2017, when the possibility of further housing development adjoining Dorchester will certainly be back on the agenda!

Charles Street retail-led development Phase 2

In early May I, some Committee members and Councillor Alistair Chisholm met representatives of Simons, West Dorset's development partner for Charles Street. It was apparent from the meeting that despite attempts to present a relatively 'upbeat' message Simons face significant challenges if they are to deliver on their current commitments. A number of critical deadlines lie ahead the first of which is Simons' obligation, under the terms of the December 2010 outline planning permission, to submit an application for the approval of the reserved matters for the retail-led Phase 2 of the development before 3 December 2013. Car parking remains an issue as, I suspect, is the prospect of increasing competition from Brewery Square. Watch this space!

Queen Mother Square

The Duchy of Cornwall has applied for planning permission to erect three buildings to complete the Square that is intended to be the hub and heart of Poundbury. The primary use of these buildings will be residential but the Duchy's proposals include shops, restaurants and a pub. The buildings are designed by leading architects in the classical tradition but fine architecture alone will not guarantee that Queen Mother Square becomes a loved and sustainable public space. The scheme includes a landmark tower that the Duchy states will "... *act as a beacon from a distance and to provide a panoramic viewing point from Poundbury towards open country.*" However the submitted drawings show that the public will not, in fact, have access to the building: the only people who will be able to enjoy the views will be the residents of a two-floor penthouse at the top of the tower who will also be able to access the roof of the tower. Your Committee does not consider this appropriate for a building intended to be a new and prominent landmark on Dorchester's skyline. The Committee believes that there should be public access to the top of the tower and that it should be developed as a visitor attraction supporting the businesses around the Square and helping to promote a lively atmosphere in what will be a large public square. The tower's upper floors might, for example, house an interpretation centre for the history and development of Poundbury and the public would be able to access the roof level to enjoy panoramic views of the town and the surrounding landscape. Whether our comments on the planning application will have any effect remains to be seen.

Proposed Wind Farm

Broadview Energy Limited has applied for temporary planning permission to erect a 60m meteorological mast on land at Higher Burton Farm, east of Charminster. Why should this proposal concern Dorchester Civic Society you may ask? Because this is the first step in a process that could result in the construction of a wind farm on the site comprising up to seven wind turbines each with a capacity to generate 2-3 megawatts. By way of comparison each turbine would be similar in height to the turbine at Junction 11 of the M4 motorway, near Reading; and approximately twice the height of the turbine visible from the A35, at Rogershill Farm near Bere Regis. Early indications are that five or more of the turbines would be visible at any one time from parts of Dorchester, some approach roads to the town and, for example, from Maiden Castle. We did not object to the application for a temporary mast but stated that this was without prejudice to our stance on the acceptability or otherwise of the construction of a wind farm. Broadview have indicated that they would welcome the Society's involvement in the development process. I would welcome your views on the principle of building a wind farm a mile and a half or so from the edge of Dorchester and on the number and size of turbines being proposed.

Date for your dairy

Dorset Architectural Heritage Week – 11th to 19th September. For information telephone 01202 888992; or email dahw@edht.org.uk or dahoffice@gmail.com.

I look forward to meeting many of you again in September at the AGM.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Alan Rowley